Audience Engagement;
Improved Presentation through Theatre Techniques

Presented by Joel Ebarb
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of Theatre
Before we begin...

- Purdue University Department of Theatre
- Patti and Rusty Rueff School of Visual and Performing Arts

Theatre - 4 productions per year
Art Galleries - new show every week
Dance Concerts - 4 shows per year
Audience Engagement

- The performing arts strive to build connections
- Good presentation techniques can be defined as the ability to connect with others
- Engagement is connection
- People want to be talked to, not at
- Change is exciting
- Clarity is key; people want to understand
- You are in complete control of yourself as a presenter
- Theatre techniques can help you be more successful at audience engagement
What makes a *bad* presentation?
Theatre Techniques

- Actors have only 3 tools: the brain (imagination and intellect), the body (actions and deeds) and the voice (quality and diction)

- We are all actors when we create a persona, a version of ourselves that we carefully cultivate and maintain for professional use (and sometimes personal use as well!)
The Voice as a Tool

- Actors have only 3 tools: the brain, the body, and the voice

- We can use the same techniques that actors learn to manage and manipulate the voice to become an effective tool
The Human Voice

- The **human voice** consists of sound made by a human being using the vocal folds or chords for talking, singing, laughing, crying, screaming, etc.
- Generally speaking, the mechanism for generating the human voice can be subdivided into three parts; the lungs, the vocal folds within the larynx, and the articulators.
- The lung (the pump) must produce adequate airflow and air pressure to vibrate vocal folds (this air pressure is the fuel of the voice).
- The vocal folds (vocal cords) are a vibrating valve that chops up the airflow from the lungs into audible pulses that form the laryngeal sound source. The muscles of the larynx adjust the length and tension of the vocal folds to ‘fine tune’ pitch and tone.
- The articulators (the parts of the vocal tract above the larynx consisting of tongue, palate, cheek, lips, etc.) articulate and filter the sound emanating from the larynx and to some degree can interact with the laryngeal airflow to strengthen it or weaken it as a sound source.
Chest Voice vs. Head Voice

- We all have two “voices”
- One is supported by our chest and resonates within our rib cage
- One is located primarily in the “voice box” or upper throat
- The chest voice has more power and is considered more masculine, the head voice can more easily convey emotion and is considered more feminine
- Which one do you use most often? Why and when?
Exercise your voice!

- Loosening the face
- Repetition of consonant sounds
- Vowel slides
- Scales ("How are you doing today?")
- Most English speakers are very lazy regarding their hard consonants, examples: k, d, b, t, etc.
- Soft consonants such as n, r, s, v, etc. can me muddled as well.
- The use of consonants can be improved with tongue twisters.
Examples of Tongue Twisters

- The big black bug bit the big black bear and the big black bear bled.
- Nice naughty neighbors napped noisily near the northern edge of Netherton.
- The tight tone of the tense tiger terrified the tiny town terrifically.
- Valiant, victorious Vicki violently vibrated a vase of violets.

- Hint: SLOW DOWN!
The Voice as a Tool

- Actors have only 3 tools: the brain, the body, and the voice
- We can use the same techniques that actors learn to manage and manipulate the body to become an effective tool
Everyone has Style

- **aesthetic**: an individual or group perception, theory, or conception of that which is beautiful or attractive and pleasing to the senses
- **taste**: inclination in regards to aesthetic choices
- **style**: a distinctive manner of expression

You have style, but your taste may not please everyone’s aesthetic
Style in Clothing

- Formal versus informal
- Classic versus trendy
- Restrictive versus comfortable
- Good grooming = Confidence
- Your mother was right: Better to be overdressed than underdressed
- What should we remember? You or your clothes?
Style in Body Language

- Formal versus informal
- Are you open or closed?
- Do you advance or recede?
- Using eye contact
- Occupying space
- Personal space: rumble, romance, or run
- Your mother was right: POSTURE
- Finding your “center”
The Voice as a Tool

- Actors have only 3 tools: the brain, the body, and the voice

- We can use the same techniques that actors learn to manage and manipulate the brain to become an effective tool
What is confidence?

- A feeling or consciousness of one’s power or reliance on one’s circumstances
- What does this mean?
  - Power
  - Reliance
  - Circumstances
- For our purposes, we can define **confidence** as the ability to project **control** over our work environment
- How do you project **confidence**?
Projecting Confidence

- Prepare relentlessly
- Demonstrate consistency
- Manage your image
- Taking possession of space
- Engage others vocally
- Never apologize (wait, let me explain...)
- Your mother was right: Say “please” and “thank you”
Networking Exercise

- Small Group Interaction
- Reminders:
  - Sincere Greeting
  - Body Language
  - Eye Contact
  - Active Listening
  - Attention to Voice
  - Give and Take
Answer and Question

- I was born in Louisiana; have you ever visited Louisiana?
- Yes, I visited New Orleans once; have you ever been there?
- Yes, but it was a long time ago; did you enjoy the food?
- Not really, I thought the food was too spicy; do you like spicy food?
- Yes and no, it depends; what kind of food do you like?
- I love breakfast food, it is my favorite meal of the day! Have you ever been to Triple XXX for breakfast?
- Not yet, but I hear it is delicious; would you take me there sometime?
- Sure, that would be fun; are you free tomorrow?
Improvisation Exercise

Title: Expert Interview

How: A single person is brought up to be interviewed by a facilitator. We get a suggestion from the audience for the subject of the interview. It could be as mundane as toothpicks or as specific as 16th Century French Literature. The volunteer then acts as a guest on a TV show who being interviewed. It should be emphasized that nothing the guest says is incorrect. They are the expert and if they claim it to be true, then it is true! Since you may be dealing with people who may never have performed before, the interviewer should make sure to keep the conversation flowing by accepting what they are getting from the guest and asking them to delve deeper into it or support their ideas.

Why: Confidence, thinking quickly, responding to stimulus
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